

# Hadramautic language

Hadramautic or Ḥaḍramitic was the easternmost of the four known languages of the Old South Arabian subgroup, of Semitic. It was used in the Hadhramaut and also the area round the Hadhramite capital of Shabwah, in what is now Yemen. The Hadramites also controlled the trade in frankincense through their important trading post of Sumhuram (Hadramautic  $s_1MHRM$ ), now Khor Rori in the Dhofar Governorate, Oman.

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## Script and phonology

Almost the entire body of evidence for the ancient Ḥaḍramautic language comes from inscriptions written in the monumental Old South Arabian script, consisting of 29 letters, and deriving from the Proto-Sinaitic script. The sounds of the language were essentially the same as those of Sabaean (see Sabaean language).

Noteworthy characteristics of Ḥaḍramautic include its tendency, especially in inscriptions actually from Wādī Ḥaḍramawt itself, to represent Old South Arabian  $\text{t}$  as  $s_3$ : thus we find  $s_2ls_3$  ("three"; cf. Sabaean  $s_2lt$ ).<sup>[2]</sup> There are also instances where  $\text{t}$  is written for an older form  $s_3$ ; e.g. Ḥaḍramautic  $mtnad$  ("inscription"), which is  $msnd$  in the rest of Old South Arabian.<sup>[3]</sup>

## History

Potsherds with Old South Arabian letters on them, found in Raybūn, the old Ḥaḍramite capital, have been radiocarbon dated to the 12th century BC.<sup>[4]</sup> The language was certainly in use from 800 BC but in the 4th century AD the Ḥaḍramite Kingdom was conquered by the Ḥimyarites, who used Sabaean as an official language, and since then there are no more records in Ḥaḍramautic.

During the course of the language's history there appeared particular phonetic changes, such as the change from  $\text{t}$  to  $\text{s}$ , from  $\text{z}$  to  $\text{s}$ , from  $\text{t}$  to  $s_3$ . As in other Semitic languages  $n$  can be assimilated to a following consonant, compare  $'nfs_1$  "souls" >  $'fs_1$

In Ḥaḍramautic the third person pronouns begin with  $s_1$ . It has feminine forms ending in  $\text{t}$  and  $s_3$ .

| Hadramautic   |  |
|---|--|
|   | Hadrami  |
| Native to   | Yemen  |
| Era   | 800 BC – 600 AD  |
| Language family   | Afro-Asiatic <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Semitic</li> <li>▪ South</li> <li>▪ Western</li> <li>▪ Old South Arabian</li> <li>▪ Hadramautic</li> </ul> |
| Language codes  |  |
| ISO 639-3   | xhd  |
| Linguist List   | xhd ( <a href="http://multitree.org/codes/xhd">http://multitree.org/codes/xhd</a> )  |
| Glottolog   | hadr1235 ( <a href="http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/hadr1235">http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/hadr1235</a> ) <sup>[1]</sup>                  |
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| Kingdom of Hadramawt in 400 BC  |  |

## References

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2. Leonid E. Kogan and Andrey Korotayev: *Sayhadic (Epigraphic South Arabian)*. In: *The Semitic Languages*, edited by Robert Hetzron. Pg. 223. Routledge, London, 1997.
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